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Britain and Globalization

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Many perspectives on globalization see it as differentiated in its effects and reception, culturally driven, either pre-modern or post-modern, best captured by globalist or sceptical perspectives, and an equalising phenomenon. This article discusses the British experience of globalization in the light of such approaches and argues that looking at this case gives an alternative view. Six themes on globalization are explored across four areas of the British experience of globalization. It is argued that in Britain globalization is, in contrast to the approaches outlined above, differentiated but also generalising, economically driven, modern, best understood with a mix of globalist and sceptical perspectives and structured by power, inequality and conflict. It is also argued that the British experience of globalization is a specific one and that Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country, economically, culturally and politically.

The aim of this article is to look at a number of themes about globalization and discuss them in relation to the specific case of the British experience. It aims to make the case for a certain sort of theoretical perspective in this context and to make conclusions about the British experience of globalization.

Recent literature on globalization has stressed the need to go beyond a first wave of globalization theory which tended to make general and abstract assertions about globalization without differentiating forms of it and its different impacts in different locations. There have also been moves to recognize globalization as being as much culturally as economically driven and as being a phenomenon of long term historical processes or alternatively as a very recent thing of the post-war or post-1960s period. Some debates about globalization have become separated between globalist and sceptical perspectives and some commentators have tended to take a benign view of globalization as an equalising process or hybrid rather than just dominated by power or western imperialism.

This article addresses these themes in relation to the British case and comes to a number of conclusions that, as far as Britain is concerned, diverge from what the approaches above say. In doing so it also suggests that Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country, economically, politically and culturally, both historically and in the contemporary period. By this I mean that Britain has been

both an exporter of globalizing structures and processes around the world and also a very open recipient of globalization.

I will start by introducing the six key themes this article is concerned with, followed then by some other brief introductory comments. Firstly, it is true that globalization needs to be understood in terms of the differentiated way it operates at different levels: for instance there being economic, political and cultural forms of globalization which may not always operate to the same extent or with the same intensity as each other. They may also take different forms in different locations, what has some times been seen as the localisation of globalization or 'glocalization' (Hay and Marsh 2000). In terms of national differences, this phenomenon is sometimes known as path dependency or exceptionalism. This article will show, in line with this differentiating approach, how the British case is quite specific. Globalization takes a different form in the UK compared to other cases.

However while the British case shows that it is important to recognize differentiation in globalization I will argue that it is important not to let this crowd out understandings of ways in which globalization can still be quite generalising in some forms. The British experience shows how there can be forms of globalization that are applied in many different places and difficult to resist. We will see how Britain has been at the centre of economically and politically generalising forms such as neoliberalism and imperialism and a receiver of generalising cultural globalization from the USA. In fact differentiation and generalisation go together in the British case because what differentiates the UK is the specific ways it has been at the intersection of the generalisation of globalization, both as an exporter and importer of it. This case shows how both differentiation and generalisation apply to globalization and that an attempt to favour one of these emphases against the other cannot work. .

Secondly, the article also argues that if you look at the British case you can see forms of globalization that are very economically led, even if not reducible to this. It is important to recognize that forms of consciousness and culture often provide an impetus behind globalization (Scholte 2005: ch 4 provides a recent summary of cultural explanations) as do political objectives. At the same time, this article argues that British experiences of globalization show the continuing importance of understandings of globalization as driven by economic imperatives and ambitions, for instance in British imperialism or globalizing Anglo-Saxon capitalism, and sometimes it is in these that other forms such as politics and culture are embedded. For instance, states may promote globalization that arise for economic reasons, and culture may spread because there is a market for it.

Thirdly, a number of important analysts of globalization have put an emphasis on globalization as primarily a phenomenon of the post-war or post 1960s/70s period (eg Scholte 2005). At the same time there have been some histories of transnational trade, religions and migrations that show these occurring well

before anything that could be described as industrialism or modernity (eg Abu-Lughod 1989, Frank and Gills 1993). This article argues that if you look at Britain you see globalization there as something that is primarily modern in its foundations and based in the technology and economic relations of industrial capitalist processes and the politics of the modern nation-state. The British experience raises some questions about the extent to which globalization, if it is to be seen as operating at a global (rather than regional or continental) extent, across economic, political and cultural levels, and with enduring interdependent relations, can be seen in this instance as primarily pre-modern or alternatively as originating in postmodern developments.

Fourthly, situating the British experience of globalization in this modern industrial capitalist period highlights that it needs to be conceptualized historically, as an older phenomenon and not just a recent thing, but also in the sense that recent features of British globalization go back to origins in these earlier British experiences. Contemporary globalization has historical origins in earlier forms of globalization and, as we shall see, empire continues to affect British politics and culture long after its demise.

Fifthly, the British experience also shows how strictly globalist or sceptical perspectives cannot really explain processes of globalization in this case. (Writers like Held et al 1999 and Holton 2005 separate globalization writing between globalists and sceptics, often putting themselves in a third transformationalist or post-sceptic camp). Some of the institutions involved in the promotion of British globalization are, as sceptics point out, not global - the nation-state's role in British imperialism, the international economy and transnational politics, for example. But it would be equally mistaken to see the British experience of globalization as one that merely leaves non-global institutions as they always have been. British culture and the British state have been changed by the way they have been inserted into international processes that they have promoted, for instance global trade, imperialism, European integration or postcolonial immigration. (The three globalist, sceptical and transformationalist perspectives on globalization and the relationships between them are discussed more fully in Martell 2006).

Sixthly, from some perspectives globalization is an equalising process and one that brings greater integration and hybridity into the world, increasingly in place of inequality, conflict and western domination (see Wolf 2004 on why globalization can reduce global poverty and Pieterse's 2004 argument for hybrid as opposed to western imperialist views of global culture). But I will argue that looking at the British case brings back into the picture the significance of power, inequality and conflict involved in processes of globalization. For example, we shall see that imperialism and asymmetries in production of and access to global culture show this.

In short, the British experience of globalization brings in some key themes: that globalization should be seen as generalising as well as differentiating; that the economic determination of globalization is important; that globalization has roots, in the British case and perhaps also others, in modernity rather than primarily in pre-modernity or in what might be called more post-modern developments; that globalization has to be understood historically; that strictly globalist and sceptical perspectives cannot either really explain the British experience of globalization; and that globalization is subjected to structures of power, inequality and conflict.

The British experience of globalization brings out a further related theme that I will highlight in this article – that Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country, both an importer and exporter of globalizing structures and processes. As we shall see, this is evident in the British empire, the openness of the British economy, British global political involvements and the UK's openness to global cultures.

Put together, the themes pursued in this article show that the British experience cannot be tested through single forms of criteria. I am highlighting some perspectives over others, modernist and materialist over pre- or post-modern and culturalist for instance, but also there are a number of factors being used here, demonstrating that globalization is something that has to be measured through multiple criteria. Sometimes contrasting criteria co-exist. For instance, Britain's specific experience shows globalization to sometimes take an imperialistic or generalising form but also that it is experienced in a differentiated way in different places, the UK in this instance having its own distinctive experience.

This article is not intended as a comprehensive review of the literature on Britain and globalization. This is too large a field to be adequately covered in a piece of this length. It is intended more as a review of some theoretical themes in relation to the British experience, although again a comprehensive review of all such possible themes cannot be covered in one article. Developing a comparative approach will require a further article or book – the focus at present here is on the UK but inevitably some comparative points are made along the way. The theoretical framework here is one that looks at the limits of postmodern and cultural perspectives on globalization, and attempts to bring out the extent to which more materialist perspectives which highlight economic and state power, inequality and modernity might be illuminating in this specific case, whilst remaining sensitive to other theoretical themes such as differentiation in globalization and multiple criteria for explaining it.

Globalization is defined here as involving the declining significance of territorial borders in inhibiting the spread of interacting and interdependent global forms of economy, politics, and culture. It involves the diffusion of economy, politics and culture from localized bases to a more global extent. It requires interdependent relations rather than just the movement of, say, people, ideas or money from one place to another. The latter alone involves global movements without necessarily

global relations and interdependence becoming established. Globalization needs to include some sort of regularity and durability in structures rather than just isolated or transient occurrences (see also Osterhammel and Petersson 2005). It should be noted also that globalization is often a process rather than something achieved and that it is reversible and negotiable rather than predetermined (see Hopper 2006). Defining globalization is important for the conclusions that are reached. For instance, we shall see that defined as above, rather than as less world-wide, globalization can be seen as something that was not as established in the pre-modern period (where genuinely transnational links were, however, less world-wide in extent) as in modern times, a period when the British were a dominant power.

I use the word 'Britain' in this article in the way it is often colloquially used, to refer to the United Kingdom (UK). In fact Great Britain is composed of England, Scotland and Wales while the UK includes also Northern Ireland. Like all nation-states the UK is a complex place. It is composed of four nations, and is also a multicultural entity. Often when commentators talk of Britain what they say applies more to England, the dominant country in the UK. In this article I will be referring to the four nations of the UK but with a consciousness that such an entity is complex and constructed. In fact some of the points I want to make are about the links between Britain's cultural hybridity and its experience of globalization and about the differentiated way the four nations of the UK respond to globalization. I will argue later in the article that the nature and character of globalization in Britain is made more complex by the various forms of identity in its regional parts, something that shows that differentiation is a form that globalization takes alongside its generalisation.

This article will look at the six themes on globalization outlined above in relation to Britain, looking first at its imperial history, then economic globalization, then global politics and finally at culture and globalization in the UK. In each section I will focus on the relevance of the six themes.

Empire and globalization

Britain as an imperial power laid the basis for an early form of globalization of economy and politics and, to some extent, culture. Britain had a global empire that spread across the Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Africa (and Europe too when you include Ireland). In the 1920s and 1930s it encompassed one fifth of the world's population and one quarter of the world's landmass, and this does not include colonies like those in North America which were by this time independent (Cain and Hopkins 2001). Its scale was unparalleled in modern times, and more globally spread than the empires of Spain and Portugal which were more internationally restricted in scope, focused strongly, if not solely, on South America. French imperialism could be found widely in Africa and Asia but did not spread as widely as the British. Other competitor imperialists did not equal the global spread of these imperial nations. The longevity of the British empire was

matched only by the empires of Spain and Portugal (Hopkins 1999) and Britain was the primary global power until the early or mid-twentieth century when this mantle passed over to the USA.

In terms of the spread of economic and political relations, and the technological bases for global communications and transportation, the British empire was as close as it was possible to get to globalization in its period. It established global relations in seeking out raw materials and new products, production and markets and established political forms and military power internationally to back up British influence and control. Forms of international communication and transport to underpin economic expansionism and political authority were laid down and used, for instance naval power and navigation and underwater cable systems that freed global communication from being confined to land and transportation systems (eg Held et al 1999: ch. 7). (An accessible introduction to British imperialism is Porter 1996. See also Cain and Hopkins 2001).

O'Brien (2003) has argued that the British power in the period of its empire should be seen in terms of primacy rather than as hegemonic as in the case of the US in the 20th and 21st century. Britain, he says, did not achieve the degree of domination through force and consent that the US has achieved. But in terms of global extent, the focus here, its empire shows Britain as historically a very globalizing and globalized country and relates also to the other themes laid out at the start of this article.

The empire was primarily an economic one, backed up, where necessary, by military power, the state and ideology but driven by motivations centred on commerce and trade. There are debates about whether the economics of empire were more about investment or trade or the expansion of commercial or industrial capital (eg, Barratt Brown 1988 and 1989; Ingham 1988). But the historian of British imperialism, Bernard Porter, by no means a Marxist, argues: 'No one any more seriously doubts that capitalist pressures were the primary reason for Britain's imperial expansion in the nineteenth century' (Porter 1996: xv). Colonies provided raw materials and imports, produce which could be exported, cheap labour, markets for manufactures and overseas opportunities for financiers. Imperialism was a basis for mobilising global resources for Britain and for British economic expansionism.

The expansion of the empire was not primarily culturally driven. This does not mean that there were not deliberate attempts to spread British or European culture through, for instance, missionaries promoting Christianity, the establishment of imperial education networks or attempts to socialize local elites. But the idea that the British were trying to civilize the world can be exaggerated (see Colley 2005 who argues that British and US imperialism have been motivated by a desire to spread cultural improvement). The most extensive spread of economic, political and cultural networks was created by the British trying to maintain global trading and economic interests and was much less

involved with the cultural transformation of colonies except where that was necessary to protect their economic interests, and even then cultural socialisation affected elites more than ordinary people. The capacity to ideologically incorporate colonial populations was limited by local resistance, the problem of establishing ideological penetration on such a broad scale, and the realisation that toleration of local diversities was necessary for taxation, trade and order to be maintained (Hopkins 1999: 205).

Hobson (1902), is one who argues that imperialism was not about civilising locals but that civilising claims were a justification for exploiting them as tools and their land for raw materials and a method for legitimating imperialism (see also Hopkins 1999: 205). In cases like India and China, he argues, cultures were in fact just as sophisticated as those coming from the imperialist West. So empire was more about economy than exporting culture. For Hobson economic motivations for empire were promulgated by financiers more than other sorts of capitalists, they were not the only motives or factors, and the economic motives of capitalists were not always accompanied by net economic benefits for the nation, because of the costs of maintaining empire – but none of these qualifications takes away the importance of economics as an original key motivating force (see also Townshend 1990, and Magnusson 1994).

A test of the case for an economic perspective can be made by focusing on one of the critics of economism. D.K. Fieldhouse (1973) attempts to provide a counter-argument to economically reductionist explanations of British imperialism, Marxism being especially his target. Fieldhouse argues that there are Eurocentric explanations for imperialism which are either economic or non-economic and that there also less Eurocentric explanations. He tries to make the case for the non-economic arguments and for those which are less Eurocentric. The non-economic causes of imperialism he suggests are more political ones to do with imperialist action to maintain political authority abroad, power, prestige and security or nationalistic jingoistic attitudes at home. There is a non-Eurocentric angle to this because he says that such attempts at imperialism were often responses to problems in peripheries that required greater intervention as much as imperatives originating from the imperial country. However, despite his advice, on such bases, against economic arguments, Fieldhouse's case, a prominent alternative to economic explanations, in actuality adds to or balances economic explanations or adds greater layers of complexity to them, rather than undermining them. He explicitly states that many of the political and peripheral issues that led to extensions of imperialism arose on the base of originally economic expansions based on trade. It was where imperial powers already had such economic interests that other not directly economic reasons for further intervention were based. Fieldhouse sums up this position himself:

'Economic factors were present and in varying degrees influential in almost every situation outside Europe which led ultimately to formal empire; and the specific value of many of these territories to Europeans

lay in trade, investment opportunities or other forms of economic activity ... the vital link between economics and formal empire was ... the secondary consequence of problems created on the periphery by economic and other European enterprises for which there was no economic solution ... the original economic issue had to some degree become 'politicized' and therefore required an imperial solution' (1973: 475-6).

In short an attempt to provide a corrective to Eurocentric and economic explanations by rightly emphasising peripheries and political factors makes clear that European economic objectives underlay such non-European and non-economic actions. (See also Burroughs 1998 and Howe 1998).

I will move on now to others of the six themes on globalization as they relate to Britain's imperial past. Establishing political authority and imposing military power were central to advancing the economic expansionism that made empire. So contrary to strong globalism the state was part of globalization as much as undermined by it. Yet contrary to strong scepticism, state action played a part in transforming the world to one more characterized by global relations. It was a driving force in globalization but in being so helped to create imperial links and powers which are more transnational and less centred on nation-state power and which, as we shall see, have ongoing legacies in terms of British integration into processes of globalization.

The state and capitalist expansionism which were central to the British empire are institutions and processes of the modern era. Their central involvement in the spread of the British empire shows this instance of globalization to be primarily a modern one. In relation to the historical theme set out earlier, empire shows globalization as situated historically in the modern era, rather than being something of the post-1960s. It was in those days that extensive global relations were established, especially economic and political.

Developments in globalization in the 1960s and 1970s in the international economy, international politics or cultural hybridity, intensified by new information technologies, may show the revival of global interactions after reversals of globalization in the inter-war period. But in relation to earlier periods such as that of British imperialism they show a quantitative intensification or rejuvenation in forms of economic and political globalization and global encounters of people and ideas rather than the first onset of such developments. The globalization of the capitalist economy, political rule over global extents, encounters of people and ideas globally, together with industrial technologies that allowed these to happen, were well underway earlier in the British imperial days.

Studies by authors such as Abu-Lughod (1989) and Frank and Gills (1993) (see also Hopkins 2002 and Gills and Thompson 2005) show that transnational trade, culture and innovation preceded the globalization created by western capitalism

and European imperialism. Such studies provide an important corrective to Eurocentrism, showing that transnational forms, in terms of trade, religion and the spread of ideas and inventions from the East, pre-existed those established by western powers. They also show that what made the West in its capitalist and imperialist days owes a lot to what was taken from the East to the extent that ideas of East-West distinctiveness become problematic (see also Hobson 2004).

But historians like Osterhammel and Petersson (2002) argue that while globalization started before the postwar period, in the modern era, it did not fully develop as early as pre-modern and pre-industrial times when transnational forms crossed continents but not to a global or regularized extent. Premodern histories talk mainly of Asian and European (with some involvement of the Middle East and parts of North Africa) rather than global trade links (which would, for instance, have to encompass also the Americas). There were not yet the state and industrial forms to sustain global interdependence and integration of a more regular and stabilised sort in areas such as transportation, communication, migration and commerce. For writers like Osterhammel and Petersson, more developed forms of globalization in these areas were in the modern era because of industrial technology and imperialist politics which Britain was, for good or ill, at the centre of. British globalization established more developed and extensive political, military, communications and transportation forms of globalization, partly because of what the industrial capacity of this era made possible, and, in imperial networks, also greater regularisation and interdependency in global processes.

Furthermore globalization today is based in nation-state political forms, capitalist economic relations, industrial technology, modern communications and transportation, and colonial legacies of the sort established in the modern period more than in premodern forms of trade, religion and migration, although the latter were significant in the past and in feeding into modern forms. So, globalization became most established in the modern period (influenced by pre-modern forms); and also globalization today is embedded in these modern forms. (These historical issues are drawn out more fully in Martell forthcoming).

Globalization is historical not only in the sense that its early days were in a past rather than contemporary phase but also in that current global forms have developed from historical antecedents. Contemporary globalization is shaped by history. Immigration from former colonies has changed the cultural shape and political agenda in Britain. Britain continues to aspire to a global role in politics, and has a more problematical relationship with a regional European political role in a way which may be linked to the global role of the nation's imperial past. And some argue that national identities within the British Isles, of the English and other constituent nations of the UK, are affected by roots in the imperial past. I will return to these points shortly.

Needless to say, global imperialism does not happen without the exercise of power, conflict and inequality, to support another of the themes on globalization.

Some of the more free trade friendly globalization literature sees globalization as an equalising force. There is also a cultural literature that reacts against ideas of globalization as Western imperialism by saying that the picture is a more mixed and hybrid one. But under British imperial globalization domination was maintained by force or the threat of it, and the input into empire was far from an evenly mixed and hybrid one that went beyond imperial domination. The British were a powerful imperial and military force maintaining their hold in many areas of the world despite resistance or potential resistance and in a situation of inequality with subject powers, not to mention in some tension with competitor imperialists. British imperialism involved domination and exploitation and power was established, maintained and relinquished often in situations of conflict.

To sum up so far, Britain was an exporter and importer of globalization historically in its imperial days and the experience of empire backs up the themes of this article: that globalization is often economic in its bases; that it cannot be captured easily by either globalist or sceptical perspectives; that it mainly developed in the modern period; that it is historical rather than a novel development of the post war or post-1960s periods; and that it involves the exercise of power, inequality and conflict as much as equalisation.

And a nation's experience of globalization is different. Britain's experience of globalizing processes is a unique one not replicated by any other nation. Empire is a mode through which Britain has been an importer and exporter of globalization in the past. There have been other imperialists with similar experiences but none others have been so to the same extent, in the same places, with colonialism exercised in quite the same ways, with the same combinations and substance of historical legacies. All countries are unique of course, not just the UK. The point here is that globalization is experienced differentially and the British experience is one case that demonstrates this fact.

Nevertheless, globalization has generalising as well as differentiating tendencies. While the British imperial experience was unique it also rolled out global forms to other parts of the world in a generalising way. And more contemporary forms of globalization also show the generalisation of globalization as well as differentiated experiences of it. Economic globalization is one area where this is felt most strongly.

Economic globalization

Industrialisation is a globalizing form that originated in the mid 18th century in Britain, a nation already at that time quite globalized through foreign trade and colonial connections. In part British industrialisation was an attempt to compete globally with rivals in areas such as textiles. From such origins industrialisation has spread through creative adaptation, affecting areas of life throughout societies where it has been introduced. It has also provided bases for further globalization through developments such as steamships which facilitated global

transportation, and industrialized arms production that allowed for imperial domination. Britain has not only been an initiator of globalizing industrialisation but also a globalizer of free trade. In the mid 19th century it pursued global free trade, often, as contrary as this sounds, imposed by force. (Osterhammel and Petersson 2002: ch. 4). As we shall see shortly the UK continues to be associated, relatively speaking, with a free trade version of capitalism.

Hirst and Thompson (2000) show empirically how the UK has continued to be an economically very globalized country, a special case more so than others in the G7. Britain has historically and recently been very open to international trade and capital flows. This has been punctuated by reversals and was more extended in the early twentieth century than in the postwar era that some see as the main period of economic globalization, but still significant in the current period nevertheless and fostered by policies of globalization followed by Conservative and New Labour governments from the 1970s onwards. The data used by Hirst and Thompson show that the UK is very open to FDI flows both as an exporter and the recipient of inward flows and is highly exposed to the international financial system. Banks, pension funds and investment houses invest a greater proportion of domestic capital abroad, often in risky ventures, than in the case of other G7 countries, so making the economy, welfare and households vulnerable to external shocks. Such measures show how the UK economy is considerably more internationalized than other G7 economies. It is more alike in terms of inward investment to some Newly Industrialized Countries and more penetrated than the main Latin American economies in this respect. In terms of reliance on overseas trade and foreign investment the UK is more like smaller highly internationalized European economies such as Belgium or the Netherlands than other G7 economies.

For Hirst and Thompson, the effect is that the domestic economy is hollowed out, a great deal of investment abroad, the British manufacturing sector dominated by foreign-owned firms and investment from overseas, without much of a domestic productive base to fall back on and vulnerable to externally initiated shocks and overseas economic circumstances and decisions. British government policies in the last 30 years or so have tended to promote this economic internationalism without the sort of public policies and welfare provision that could foster domestic firms and cushion individuals against volatility. (There is not space to repeat here the details of the data referred to by Hirst and Thompson but it can be found in their article).

So the UK appears to be continuing from the imperial days as highly and distinctively globalized economically. As in its earlier free trade days, it is also closely associated with a neo-liberal type of capitalism that is often identified with contemporary globalization. 'Anglo-Saxon' capitalism is linked with countries like the USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand and contrasted with more statist or collectivist economies like Germany's and Japan's (see Albert 1993 and Hutton 1995). For many globalization *is* neoliberalism and countries like Japan and

Germany who were seen by some in the 1980s as successes to be studied have been perceived from the 1990s onwards to be in need of liberalisation in a more Anglo-Saxon direction (see almost any issue of *The Economist* magazine for this view). It is global neoliberalism or the 'Washington Consensus', backed up by state action and global organisations like the World Bank and World Trade Organisation, which is seen to drive the decision-making of developed and less developed countries when trying to attract investment and making policy about things like regulation of the economy and public spending. Such decisions are subject to various conflicting forces but in many societies are especially made along neo-liberal lines to make the economy more dynamic and competitive, attract foreign investment and under pressure from neo-liberally inclined governments and international organisations.

Some surveys show a preponderance of egalitarian and interventionist rather than neoliberal attitudes in Britain even after many years of Thatcherism and when compared against a more collectivist country like Germany (see Kaase and Newton 1998 and Taylor Gooby 1998). Or they show that UK respondents do not seem more favourable in principle to globalization, defined as the opening up of economies and the creation of a global market, than respondents from other EU15 states. But when asked about the economic benefits of globalization UK respondents have been seen to be more positive than those from other EU states (EU 2003) and the least positive in Europe about government intervention (ISSP 2001). It may be that UK citizens are no more neoliberal at an abstract level than those of other countries but in relation to more concrete questions they are - concrete rather than abstract neoliberals. Whatever the position at the level of social attitudes, British politics and business is widely associated with the more Anglo-Saxon model at the centre of globalization than the more social models of other parts of Western Europe, although this is not to say that Britain does not have its own extensive forms of social provision, more developed than, for instance, in the USA.

To sum up so far, Britain was an economic globalizer in the imperial days, an originator of globally spreading industrialisation, is still a highly internationalized economy, and is associated with the Anglo-Saxon model often identified as being what globalization is all about nowadays. As such, Britain seems to be historically and currently an importer and exporter of structures and processes of globalization.

These observations about Britain link to the other themes of this article. They show how British globalization is historical and of the modern period, linked to the capitalist expansionism of empire, more intensified in some ways in the early 20th century than later, and well developed before a postmodern period of information technology and contemporary hybrid culture arrived. They also show how much British globalization has been an economic as much as a cultural matter – involving entanglement in global economic relations in imperial and 20th century days and associated with a dominant form of economic globalization, Anglo-

Saxon capitalism. British state power in imperial days and the state's role later in fostering ongoing integration into the international economy and promoting Anglo-Saxon capitalism, under Mrs Thatcher and New Labour for instance, does not lead to purely globalist conclusions in which nation-states are diminished. At the same time, the extension of international entanglements that the highly globalized UK has got involved in and made itself vulnerable to doesn't lead to more sceptical conclusions about a world of states remaining autonomous.

Furthermore the British case economically shows the exercise of power, inequality and conflict in globalization. Empire was imposed through power and in situations of inequality and conflict. The global economy to which Britain is very open and in which it is associated with neoliberal capitalism is one where there are big inequalities and power differences between states, with powerful corporate actors and investors disproportionately originating from the most wealthy nations. For some this means that there is not a global economy but one in which trade and investment are concentrated within blocs centred around the USA, Japan and Europe (Hirst and Thompson 1999). In this triad Britain is part of the economic core with a different role in globalization to members of the periphery.

Finally the experience of Britain in economic globalization is unique and different, as is the case for all nations. No other nation has this combination of the UK's imperial history, such openness for a large economy and Anglo-Saxon economic affinities, supporting the argument that globalization is differentiated rather than an abstract and general phenomenon experienced in the same way everywhere. But the British case also shows how globalization can be generalized – with the spread of imperialist domination, Britain's high level of exposure to the international economy and the diffusion of neoliberal capitalism of an Anglo-Saxon sort in many parts of the world.

Global Politics

When it comes to transnational politics Britain has been an important but reluctant participant in the EU but more enthusiastic about global politics. By transnational politics I mean politics that goes on beyond the level of the nation and the nation-state. By global I mean where this reaches a global extent. So the European Union is an example of a transnational form of politics but one which is at a regional rather than a global level. This section looks at Britain's involvements in transnational politics at such levels.

Britain has frequently shown reluctance about European integration. Between 1979 and 2004 the UK had the lowest average electoral turnout of EU members in the 6 European Parliament elections it was involved in. The low point was 1979 when UK turnout was 32.2% against an EU average of 63%, with the next lowest turnout being 47.8% in Denmark. The high point was 2004 when turnout reached a peak of 38.9% in the UK, still the lowest of the EU 15, with an EU wide

average of 45.7% (European Parliament 2004). Eurobarometer polls show UK citizens as the most negative amongst all member nations on whether the EU is seen as 'a good thing' – in 2004 38% of UK respondents saw the EU as a good thing as against an EU-wide average of 56%; in 2005 Britain came bottom of the poll with 36% against an EU average of 54% (European Commission 2005). Britain has frequently resisted and fought over agreements at EU level, for instance opting out of the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, and it is one of the minority of the 15 countries from before enlargement that has not joined the single currency. Polls show a steady majority amongst the public against membership of the Euro.

Why is this? The UK is a set of islands. This has made mobility into the rest of Europe more of a task than in other continental countries reinforcing a sense of separateness. Britain also experienced relative political stability in the 20th century. It was not invaded, did not experience military dictatorship, revolution or a coup, and neither fascism nor communism in government. For other nations European integration has been seen as something that can help protect them from repeats of such traumas. In Britain separation from Europe was one thing that protected her from phenomena like invasions. This does not mean that this reason for detachment from Europe endures in the minds of the British today. But valuing separation may have outlived the original rationale for it. In addition, for other countries in Europe integration is more of a minor disturbance to politics compared to their turbulent pasts while for the British, compared to their recent history of relative internal stability, it is a comparatively more significant transformation in the way politics is done. This may be one reason why it is approached with greater trepidation.

The UK occupies an ambivalent position between Europe and the USA. Britain was a colonial power in America and relied heavily on the alliance with the USA in the 1940s. It shares a language with the Americans which it does with no European country except Ireland. While nations like France and Germany are historically associated with more collectivist or statist versions of capitalism, the UK shares with the USA an affinity with a more neoliberal form of capitalism. Certainly, there is a history of socialism in the UK, a welfare state that is more European than American and neoliberalism in the UK has arisen through conflict and not in a natural evolutionary process. Also, Post-communist Central and Eastern European states have shown an enthusiasm for more free markets, and privatisation and economic liberalism is not exactly absent from Western Europe. But Britain also shares a liberal economic culture with the US more enthusiastically than some other Northern and Western European states do. Shared language and shared neoliberal affinities are amongst the factors that have made the UK open to the penetration of American media and culture. As such Britain is reticent to throw itself fully in with Europe because of another affiliation it historically holds, an Atlanticist one.

A 2003 Eurobarometer survey showed that when asked about US influence on globalization UK respondents were the most positive out of respondents from EU member states, although not by a very large margin. When asked for their views on the EU's influence on globalization UK respondents were the most negative (EC 2003). In an international survey of public attitudes, respondents from Anglo-Saxon countries were more negative than others on the statement that the provision of childcare should be a government responsibility. UK respondents were closer to Europe than the USA in their responses but the least interventionist by European standards, a position which may be more generally representative of the UK's position in relation to the US and Europe (ISSP 2001). (The relationship of British politics to Europe and America has been explored by Gamble 2003. He and Young 1997 are amongst those who discuss Britain's reluctance about Europe in a global context).

So political stability in a situation of relative detachment and affinities with the US may in part be explanations for Euro-caution in the UK. But while a reluctant European compared to many other EU members, Britain is, for good or ill, a state involved in global politics (see also McCormick 2003: ch 8). Britain has been a military intervener in the Gulf, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, in some cases with which some other European states, such as France and Germany, were in disagreement. It is a member of many of the world's leading international political organisations (a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and an important member of NATO, the G7, the OECD, the WTO and other international organisations). It is the world's fourth largest economy and one of two powers in Europe with nuclear weapons. Both Thatcherism and Blairism have attracted global interest as political phenomena of the 1980s and 1990s. And despite its Euro-reluctance Britain is a significant European power.

One explanation for Britain's global involvements lies with her imperial past. In the European Union Britain remains at best the third most significant power, and outside the two main drivers of European integration, Germany and France. This is a comedown from an imperial past of global leadership. But as a leading member of global interventions and organisations British politicians can feel that their country is a higher ranking power at a more international level, sometimes the second most significant participant after the USA, albeit a distant second. To be a major global actor rather than a third ranking European regional power may feel more in keeping with Britain's imperial past to its leaders who aspire to a continuing leading international status. (Cain and Hopkins 2001 also reflect on the continuation of imperial legacies after the end of empire). However, the opposition of the majority of the British public to the Iraq war suggests they do not necessarily share some politicians' desire for Britain to be playing a leading role in such global interventions.

To sum up, Britain's Euro-reluctance and involvements in global politics may be affected by factors such as its island status, Europe's turbulent history in the 20th century, the country's imperial past, and historical links with the USA (see also

Young 1997 and Reynolds 2000 on Britain's world relations in the 20th century). They are not predetermined by such factors. Transnational political involvements are matters of political choice made also according to additional factors such as economic interest and ideology. Alternative choices are possible. But such historical influences are part of the explanation for how choices in this particular context may have come to be made.

Britain's role in European and global politics supports a number of the themes on globalization I have mentioned in this article. Its relationships in these configurations show differentiation in the experience of globalization. Most other nations in Europe are, for instance, more enthusiastic Europeans and some are less enthusiastic participants in global politics, as has been mentioned in relation to some military interventions. The specificity of Britain's political role comes in part from what is distinct about its history, such as its imperial past and the historical constitution of its European and American links. Britain's participation in regional and global politics is rooted in institutions and processes of the modern era, such as the nation-state, global imperialism and historical events of the twentieth century, rather than in more recent globalizing forces of the post-1960s such as the information revolution or cultural hybridity. Britain's imperial past conditions its reluctance to involve itself in Europe relative to its global enthusiasms. And it is through the power of the British nation-state that historical imperialism was built and participation in the EU and global institutions and interventions are conducted.

Globalization is in part constructed through state action and political agency and so is not purely economically determined. But political agency is often aimed at furthering or underpinning economic expansionism and is economically mediated. The historical and contemporary role of Britain in the global sphere has followed from the global extension of capitalism. The empire was an attempt at economic expansionism, even if it cannot be reduced to that, and Britain's position now between Europe and the USA, its Atlanticism and globalizing role are connected in part to its neo-liberal Anglo-Saxon form of capitalism, something that not all other European nations adopt to the same extent but that Britain does share with the USA.

The explanations I have outlined do not support either a strongly globalist or a strongly sceptical perspective. The British state is a key actor in European and global politics. So contrary to a strong globalism there is a significant role for the state. But the state also plays a role in constituting major transnational forms of politics, contrary to positions sceptical about the rise of a global politics. Needless to say there are power, inequalities and conflicts in European and global politics. States have unequal amounts of power, and conflicts result amongst European countries and between some of them (and countries on other continents) and the USA, for instance over free trade and protectionism, whether economic and welfare models should be more social or more liberal, and over justifications for the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the USA and UK.

In short, the experience of Britain in European and global politics exemplifies the themes of this article: on differentiation; modernity; history; economy; globalism and scepticism; and power, inequality and conflict. And Britain has been politically a very globalized and globally involved country politically.

Culture and globalization

As with the economy and politics Britain is very open to the globalization of culture. Britain's cultural globalization can be seen in post-colonial inputs into its culture and its relationship to the Americanisation of culture, but attitudes to globalization vary between the four countries of the UK.

One area in which multicultural or hybrid dimensions to British culture have arisen has been from post-war immigration from former colonies. A focus on post-war post-colonial immigration overlooks that Britain has long been a hybrid country, through centuries of invasions and migration. However, post-war postcolonial inputs have brought further complexities to British culture through greater cultural diversity and raised political questions to do with immigration and citizenship, multiculturalism and integration, racism and inequality, and, for some, national identity. The latter, a lot of which is constructed and imagined, and complex, especially in a state which is already multi-national, has become more complex with greater multi-culturalism. (Castles and Miller 2003 outline global migration drawing out the implications for ethnic relations and multiculturalism).

As well as postcolonial inputs Britain is also open to Americanisation of its culture (discussed more generally in Beck et al 2003). Historically the globalization of American culture started with the mass production of Fordism and Taylorism, the mass consumption that followed (for instance in car ownership) and mass culture spreading from the USA to other parts of the world, through the proliferation of new forms of communications technology (Reynolds 2002). American cultural exports started off with jazz, film and rock 'n' roll (Osterhammel and Petersson 2005) and US culture has come to be prevalent in youth and pop culture, the media, such as cinema and TV, and in a consumerist and individualist economic culture similar in both the USA and UK. The two countries share a language which makes Britain especially open to American cultural imports such as TV programming (see Thompson 1995: ch 5 on US media exports). For Reynolds (2002) globalism helped America create a national identity, as a globalizer, in a diverse nation, in the same way that some argue, as we shall see, imperialism did for Britain.

The penetration of American culture in the UK and elsewhere can be exaggerated. Beyond more superficial consumer culture there may be differences in the customs, habits and values of people of different nations. While countries other than the UK are open to Americanisation, elsewhere in the world US culture is also sometimes less evident, resented or resisted. It can sometimes

be more at the level of economy and politics than culture that American power is most extensive, through American-dominated neoliberal capitalism and its political-military strength. Globally societies are often a hybrid mix of the domestic and incoming elements from other parts of the world (see for instance Robins 1997 and Pieterse 2004). Hybridisation can be used to describe British culture, open to inputs not just from America and former colonies but broadly from, for instance, Asia, Africa and Latin America when it comes to music, fashion, and food, for example. And British culture is also not just an importer. The dominance of English as a world language is one factor that facilitates the export of British culture, pop music and media (Thompson 1995: ch 5).

But Britain does not have a monolithic relationship to globalization. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland show different attitudes to globalization from those in England. The smaller UK nations tend to be more friendly to Europe and less so to Atlanticism and Britain's global interventions. Anglo-American capitalism involves a culture of individualism which is less strong in Scotland. Social attitudes data show such regional differences: for instance Scots as more egalitarian and interventionist than people in the Midlands, London and the South of England and more pro-European than the English, with the exception of Londoners (see Curtice 1988 and 1996, Curtice and Heath 2000, and Curtice and Seyd 2002). Some poorer regions within the smaller UK countries have more to gain from the EU and are more inclined to bypass the UK nation-state to which they have less of an allegiance than the English. So there are regional differences within the UK in attitudes to aspects of globalization such as the values of Anglo-American capitalism and wider political entities like Europe.

Some like Colley (1992) have argued that British imperialism involved the Welsh, Irish and especially the Scots, as well as the English, and that it was a factor that united the four nations in a shared British identity. But it has also been argued that the Scots were involved in the empire in a subordinate role to the English and that the empire led to a stronger sense of Scottish identity than existed before (Hopkins 1999: 212). The Scots, Welsh and Irish have been as much historically colonized (by the English) as colonizers and so can sometimes be as anti-imperialist as linked to imperialism, and identify with the history of their own nations rather than with that of the British as a whole and its wider historical extension. (There are, of course, variations from this, for instance amongst unionists in Northern Ireland). Furthermore with the decline of empire there was not so much of a British project to identify with and this, it is argued, has led the Scots, Welsh and Irish to fall back on their own identities, this being one factor leading to political devolution instigated by the first Blair government (Gamble 2003).

Kumar (2003) argues that Britain's imperial past has also had implications for English identity. He suggests that English identity is more elusive than national identity for the Scots, Welsh and Irish and most of mainland Europe because as an imperialist nation the English developed a sense of externally-oriented

missionary nationalism and less of an internal sense of national identity, except insofar as the latter was related to their larger external enterprises. As a result, Kumar argues, the English have more trouble identifying themselves in the post-imperial era than some other nations. For the English the loss of empire calls either for a new reassessment of identity or, as has been mentioned above in relation to European and global politics, for a continuing sense of imperial aspirations through other channels, or both.

To sum up, Britain seems, as with the economy and politics, quite a globalized country culturally, affected by, for instance, post-colonial and American inputs into its culture. But it is not homogeneous in attitudes to globalization, there being regional differences in attitudes to the values of Anglo-Saxon capitalism, Europe and, perhaps, variations in responses to post-imperialism.

These experiences of Britain in global culture support the six themes on globalization of this article. The combination of commonwealth immigration, the mode of Americanisation and the varying experiences of the four nations differentiate Britain from other countries. Other nations share some of these inputs but Britain's combination of them is its own, just as other nations have their own unique mixtures of cultures. Differentiation in relation to globalization also occurs within the UK's different nations and cultures. But at the same time differentiation is accompanied by generalisation globally, in the case of economics and politics as argued above, and culturally in the case of American culture, for instance.

History is important to Britain's cultural globalization, imperial history being behind postcolonial influences on British culture, links with the USA, and reasons given for differences in the UK's four nations' relationships to globalization. Economic drives were behind the imperial expansion which has been influential in these ways and behind the importing and exporting of culture more recently. Culture globalizes in part because of efforts to buy and sell it, although its globalization cannot be reduced to this.

Cultural globalization is affected by power, inequality and conflict. The importing of American culture is linked to the US dominance of the cultural industry through its large media conglomerates and there is an asymmetry in production of and access to culture (Thompson 1995, Held et al 1999: ch 7), the UK being at the powerful end of things on a global scale in both aspects. The export and import of culture can lead to conflict and the UK is more receptive as far as the diffusion of American culture goes, whether this is economic and political values or US media, than some other parts of the world. A country as nearby to Britain as France, for instance, is known for government attempts to resist too much intrusion from the English language and Anglo-American pop music.

Globalist perspectives can detect the exposure of countries like the UK to the diffusion of culture across national boundaries but have sometimes tended not to

recognize differences in productive power, access, and reception of media and culture, in which respects the UK is relatively open globally compared to some other places. Scepticism can recognize the importance of national differences in such regards but be less sensitive to the way these combine with the reconstruction of national cultures by the global diffusion of culture, in the way I have described as being the UK experience.

Conclusion

I have argued that six themes for understanding globalization apply to the British experience. In the four areas in which I have addressed these themes we have seen that Britain is affected by its history as an imperial power, its affinities with a neoliberal mode of economic globalization, its role in regional and global politics and its hybrid globalized culture.

1) In the economy, politics and culture Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country. It has its own differentiated and unique experience of globalization, as do all nations, but has also been aligned historically and now with a generalisation of economic globalization that rolls on despite areas where there is differentiation in globalization.

2) Britain's experience of globalization has been strongly related to economic expansionism. 3) Its global experience has been based in the modern era of capitalism and the nation-state, more so than being pre-modern or originating in postmodern times. 4) It is situated in history, and history, in part, explains Britain's contemporary experience of globalization.

5) A strong globalist perspective captures the spread of globalization, something which Britain has been both an agent and recipient of, but less so the role of the nation-state and national differentiation, also parts of the British experience of globalization. A strong scepticism shows the continuing role of the nation-state but can underplay the way the state plays a role in a configuration of global forces and is reconstituted culturally and politically by them, as Britain has been by experiences such as its past imperial role, economic globalization, regional and global politics and cultural hybridisation.

6) In Britain as in other cases, these processes involve inequalities between the economically, politically and culturally more powerful and richer on one hand and the weaker and poorer on the other and the conflicts that result from the meetings of such unevenly divided forces. Britain has usually been part of the core of states that have the greatest power in processes of globalization, although sometimes has been part of global processes which involve other actors more powerful than itself.

These themes come together to emphasise a perspective that stresses economic, historical, modern factors and power and inequality over postmodern,

cultural views that have a more benign pluralist and equalising view. This perspective combines sceptical as well as globalist insights and the role of generalisation in globalization as well as differentiation.

However, these circumstances behind Britain's experience of globalization do not determine it. They help to explain the choices that have been made to mould the way Britain's experience of globalization has developed. How Britain responds to globalization is in part a matter of political choice and alternative choices could be made in the future.

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